

CAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

the war. . . . Their propaganda was so efficient that it induced Mustaufi al-Mamalek, the Persian Prime Minister, to sign a treaty promising Germany the full support of the Persian administration. It was so dangerous that it obliged the British government to intervene in Persian affairs, to recruit the "South Persia Rifles" and to send armed forces to occupy Bushire and other points of strategical necessity.²⁹

Thus, seemingly, the presence of British troops in Iran during the war could be justified. Great Britain must not necessarily be considered hypocritical if, at the same time, she professed to recognize the independence of Iran.

The close of the war and its immediate aftermath coincided with the revolution in Russia. Again a division of responsibility between the tsarist and British armies on the Mesopotamian and Caucasian front necessarily involved the British in what, at the beginning, seemed to be an action against the Turko-German offensive in this sector. Later, the co-operation between the Germans and the Bol-sheviks in Baku and Turkestan once more made British intervention logical. Finally, after the collapse of Germany, Communist propaganda emanating from Moscow and Tashkent was so obviously and aggressively directed against the British Empire that the continuance of operations in Transcaspia, and thus in Iran, seemed to be both logical and necessary. The real test of British intentions in Iran came when the movement for the emancipation of Transcaucasia and Central Asia from Soviet rule collapsed and the British forces were withdrawn from those regions. Would the British insist on staying in Iran and subjecting her to a colonial regime similar to that in India? The reply was in the negative. As early as December, 1918,

the British cabinet was in favor of a speedy evacuation of troops from Iran.⁸⁰ Lord Curzon, however, as Foreign Secretary, managed to convince his colleagues that an agreement should be concluded with Iran that would assure Britain a predominant position while maintaining Iranian independence.

The result of Curzon's policy was the conclusion, on August 9, 1919, of the Anglo-Iranian Treaty, in virtue of which Great Britain

²⁹Nicolson, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc, so *Ibid.*, p. 132.